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Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

Security Council
Fifty-seventh year

Prevention of armed conflict: views of organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 55/281, in which the Assembly called upon all relevant organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to consider, in accordance with their mandates, the recommendations addressed to them in the report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict (A/55/985-S/2001/574 and Corr.1). The report provides details of the action taken to date to fulfil the provisions of resolution 55/281.

* Owing to incoming replies from organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to the letter of the Secretary-General dated 15 May 2002, the report could not be submitted at an earlier date.

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1. The present report has been prepared in accordance with paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 55/281 of 1 August 2001, in which the Assembly called upon all relevant organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to consider, in accordance with their mandates, the recommendations addressed to them in the report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict (A/55/985-S/2001/574 and Corr.1), and to inform the Assembly, preferably during its fifty-sixth session, of their views in this regard.

2. In a letter dated 26 April 2002 (A/56/935), the President of the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to bring the request contained in paragraph 3 of resolution 55/281 and the report on the prevention of armed conflict to the attention of the relevant organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system. The President also requested that the Secretary-General submit to the General Assembly a report setting out, in a consolidated form, any views submitted by the aforementioned organs, organizations and bodies pursuant to paragraph 3 of resolution 55/281, as well as the replies, if any, received from regional and subregional organizations and/or civil society actors mentioned in paragraphs 2 and 4 of the same resolution.

3. On 15 May 2002, the Secretary-General addressed a letter to 42 organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system. As at 25 October 2002, 26 submissions had been received.[1] The replies discuss in some detail the progress made towards implementing the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General. As more replies are submitted from relevant United Nations organs, organizations and bodies, as well as from regional and subregional organizations and civil society actors, the Secretary-General will issue a more comprehensive, final report on the matter. The texts of the submissions from two principal organs of the United Nations, the International Court of Justice and the Economic and Social Council, are reproduced in annexes I and II to the present report. The Security Council had adopted a substantial resolution on the matter on 30 August 2001 (resolution 1366 (2001)).

4. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council have stipulated that, when a document is prepared on the basis of submissions by the agencies and programmes of the United Nations system, such submissions should not be reproduced in extenso in the body of the document or in an annex to it. Therefore, the replies received from agencies and programmes of the United Nation system are not reproduced in the present report. The Assembly and the Council decided that, should the body concerned wish to view the texts of such replies and submissions, the Secretariat should make them available in the original language and in an appropriate form. Consequently, when the Assembly resumes its discussion of this item at its fifty-seventh session, the Secretariat can make the full texts of the submissions available to interested delegations.

5. In their replies, the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system reinforce the central premise of the report on the prevention of armed conflict. Conflict prevention lies at the heart of the United Nations mandate to maintain international peace and security. Preventing potential conflicts from violent outbreak is imperative not only for long-term security but is also essential for sustainable development. It is far better and more cost-effective to prevent deadly conflicts than to find a cure once conflicts have erupted. The entire United Nations system is prepared to work towards this goal in its daily work, as well as through its

various cooperative mechanisms as described in the report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict.

6. The most valuable contribution that Member States can make towards this end is to enhance their national capacity for prevention. The United Nations is well placed to assist in this endeavour. The aftermath of 11 September 2001 not only reinforced the urgency of prevention, it also reaffirmed that prevention is not merely a choice but also a compelling necessity at the national, regional and international levels. The menace of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction has also heightened the need for far-reaching cooperation in the international community in its move towards a culture of prevention. From the responses received, it is obvious that there is a sense of urgency in the entire United Nations family to undertake enhanced efforts in cooperation and coordination.

7. A greater coherence within the United Nations system will better enable the Organization to assist Member States in enhancing their national capacity for conflict prevention. The United Nations family of organs, organizations and bodies noted its interaction with Governments and United Nations partners in this area of growing cooperation. For example, the Executive Committee on Peace and Security has established an interdepartmental and inter-agency resource group, which is making plans to implement the recommendations contained in the report on the prevention of armed conflict, including those that address the roles of regional organizations, civil society and the private sector in contributing to strategies that prevent violence.

8. The United Nations has a moral responsibility to ensure that genocides, such as the one perpetrated in Rwanda, are prevented from ever happening again. The world can no longer bear the moral, humanitarian and other costs of not preventing violent conflicts. The Secretary-General will work tirelessly with partners in the United Nations system and within the entire international community to move the Organization from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention, not only in rhetoric but in concrete, system-wide action.

Recommendation

9. **It is reassuring that a general consensus is gradually emerging among Member States that comprehensive and coherent conflict prevention strategies offer the greatest potential for promoting lasting peace and creating an enabling environment for sustainable development. The General Assembly is urged to adopt a strong and substantive resolution in support of conflict prevention, as the Security Council did on 30 August 2001.**

10. **As more replies are submitted from relevant United Nations organs, organizations and bodies, as well as from regional and subregional organizations and civil society actors, the Secretary-General will submit a further report on this matter, including a consolidated summary of all replies received, in accordance with paragraphs 2 to 4 of General Assembly resolution 55/281.**

Notes

[1] The responding organizations were the following, listed in the order in which the submissions were received: World Intellectual Property Organization, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, International Maritime Organization, International Court of Justice, United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, United Nations Institute for Training and Research, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, World Bank Group, World Food Programme, United Nations System Staff College, Universal Postal Union, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Economic and Social Council, International Labour Office, Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations University, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Annex I

Letter dated 18 June 2002 from the President of the International Court of Justice addressed to the Secretary-General

I refer to your letter dated 15 May 2002, whereby you asked me to provide you with the views of the International Court of Justice on your report on the prevention of armed conflict (A/55/985-S/2001/574 and Corr.1) and its recommendations. This is undoubtedly a topic of the utmost importance and I would add that I wholeheartedly agree that conflict prevention lies at the heart of the mandate of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security.

With regard to your report, I would make the preliminary point that the International Court of Justice has indeed lived up to its role in the Charter of the United Nations as an essential instrument in the pacific settlement of disputes between States. As noted in your report, the Court is an indispensable element of the system of peaceful settlement of disputes established by the Charter. The growing docket of the Court is clear evidence of the trust that States are increasingly placing in it. In the current year alone, the Court has dealt with various different and significant cases. In February, the Court rendered its Judgment in the *Arrest Warrant of 11 April 2000 (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Belgium)* case; in February/March it held five weeks of hearings in the *Land and Maritime Boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria (Cameroon v. Nigeria: Equatorial Guinea intervening)* case; in May, it was apprised of a new case brought by special agreement between Benin and the Niger concerning land boundary issues (for which a Chamber will be constituted); and in the current month of June the Court has held hearings in the *Sovereignty over Pulau Ligitan and Pulau Sipadan (Indonesia/Malaysia)* case, as well as on the request for provisional measures by the Democratic Republic of the Congo in relation to the case concerning *Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (New Application: 2002) (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Rwanda)*.

Given the active role which the Court can and does play in finding peaceful solutions to international disputes submitted to it, the recommendations that you address to Member States and to United Nations organs in your report are most welcome. In particular, it is to be hoped that their implementation will give further impetus to the work of the Court and enhance its role in dispute resolution and conflict prevention.

It is also very encouraging to see that your report reminds States of the availability of the Secretary-General's Trust Fund, pursuant to which financial assistance may be provided to States for expenses incurred in connection with proceedings instituted before the Court by special agreement. As you are aware, this is a subject of concern to the Court and every care should be taken to make the Fund more easily accessible for States facing financial restraints.

In conclusion, I would add that if, as a result of the fulfilment of the report's recommendations, the number of cases on the Court's docket were to increase, the General Assembly might likewise be encouraged to place sufficient resources at the Court's disposal to enable it to continue functioning in the most effective manner.

(*Signed*) Gilbert **Guillaume**
President of the Court

Annex II

Letter dated 11 July 2002 from the President of the Economic and Social Council addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to your letter of 15 May 2002 requesting the views of and the actions taken by the Economic and Social Council regarding the recommendations contained in your report on the prevention of armed conflict.

In this regard, I am pleased to inform you that the Council will give high priority to the consideration of the recommendations contained in your report at its next substantive session in July. The Council is expected to give particular attention to its role in addressing the link between peace and development in the context of its coordination segment in July 2002 on strengthening the Council to help it fulfil the role ascribed to it in the Charter of the United Nations and the United Nations Millennium Declaration. This will be the occasion for addressing the recommendations and approach contained in your report. In this context, the Council is likely to consider how it could contribute to enhancing policy and operational coordination of conflict prevention and peace-building efforts.

Furthermore, the Council is at present engaged in developing a flexible and pragmatic approach for establishing an ad hoc advisory group on African countries emerging from conflict, as recommended by the General Assembly. It is my hope that the Council will take a decision on this matter in the near future and move rapidly, upon the request of any interested country, to the first phase of implementation of its decision. The ad hoc advisory group, upon request of the country concerned, is intended to review existing arrangements to meet a country's humanitarian, reconstruction and development needs and make proposals to the Council on how to ensure adequate and coordinated assistance in order to prevent the recurrence of conflict and promote long-term development. A flexible, time-limited approach may be taken in setting up such an advisory group. The ad hoc advisory group will need, as a part of a coordinated response, to cooperate with the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Security Council on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.

In the meantime, a number of steps have been taken towards strengthening the Council's role in the prevention of armed conflict and in peace-building, particularly in addressing the root causes of conflicts in the areas that lie at the core of its mandate.

The need to enhance cooperation and coordination among the three principal United Nations organs is now widely recognized. It has been brought to the attention of the Council that the General Assembly has encouraged regular consultations between the President of the Assembly and the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.[1] In response, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council have started to have increased interaction with each other. Last year, the President of the Security Council was invited to speak to the Economic and Social Council on the question of HIV/AIDS. This year, I was invited to address the Security Council on the situation in Africa, on 29 January and

[1] General Assembly resolution 51/241, annex, para. 43, and 55/285, annex, para. 21.

22 May. The Council and its Bureau will give further consideration to the issue of enhancing collaboration with the General Assembly and the Security Council, notably in the context of its coordination segment this year.

Owing to the breadth of its mandate and the inclusiveness of its methods of work, the Economic and Social Council is well placed to mobilize international support for peace-building in a given country and to spur action by the United Nations international financial institutions, donors, regional organizations and other partners to help mobilize the needed attention and resources. The Council has responded to a country-specific situation in the past, when it decided to elaborate and implement a long-term strategy and programme of support for Haiti. The Council also made recommendations to the General Assembly on the United Nations presence in Haiti and the assistance provided by the Organization in such fields as human rights, consolidation of democracy and professionalization of the police. These recommendations facilitated the transition process following the end of the mandate of the United Nations peacekeeping mission, and led to the creation by the Assembly of the International Civilian Support Mission in Haiti (MICAH). Such an interaction between the General Assembly and the Council could possibly be replicated in other cases.

In addition to recommendation 4 of your report, which is directly addressed to the Economic and Social Council, recommendations 10 and 20, addressed to United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, also have a bearing on the Council's responsibilities to promote coherence and coordination within the United Nations system. In this regard, the Council could work with the Chief Executives Board for Coordination in promoting well-coordinated responses by the organizations of the system to the challenges of conflict prevention and peace-building.

Indeed, in recent years, the Council has, through its deliberations and decisions, contributed to conflict prevention and peace-building efforts, particularly in Africa.

In particular, in its 2001 Ministerial Declaration, the Council noted the importance of your proposal to create a subregional United Nations coordinating capability in West Africa to assist the United Nations system in developing integrated policies and strategies, ensuring harmonization of activities, and lending support to national and subregional integration. In 1999, the Council contributed to the discussion of and follow-up to your report on the causes of conflict in Africa, and in 1998 the Council noted the need to develop, through a strategic framework, a comprehensive approach to countries in crisis, in which key aspects of durable recovery, peace-building, all human rights, sustained economic growth and sustainable development should be included (agreed conclusions 1998/1).

With regard to the suggestions contained in your report for a more active involvement of the Economic and Social Council when the Security Council sets up regional initiatives for the prevention of armed conflicts, the Council should be in a better position to do so as it develops a more operational coordination capacity, for example, through the planned operation of the ad hoc advisory group on African countries emerging from conflict interacting with the Security Council's Ad Hoc Working Group on Africa. This will also provide a concrete basis for the Economic and Social Council to give further consideration to how it could contribute to a comprehensive and multidisciplinary discussion on the prevention of armed conflicts in a regional context.

During its substantive session in July 2002, the Economic and Social Council will consider your proposal for the high-level segment theme for substantive session 2003,[2] as contained in recommendation 4 of your report on conflict prevention.

With regard to recommendation 27 of your report, on non-governmental organizations and civil society, the Council has served as the principal interlocutor and an entry point for non-governmental organizations and an important forum for mobilizing civil society around key international development goals. The Council continues to find new ways of increasing the participation of non-governmental organizations in relevant aspects of its work, including organizing regional networks, forums of non-governmental organizations and direct dialogue with the representatives of non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

The Council's work on long-term development and poverty eradication, particularly in relation to increasing the flow of development assistance, also responds to recommendation 29 of your report. As you know, the Council has been assigned an important role in staying engaged in the implementation of the commitments made in the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development. To carry forward this important role, the Council will continue and build on a constructive partnership forged in the Monterrey process that brought together the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, as well as the private sector and civil society, to promote international cooperation to implement the commitments made at Monterrey on financing for development.

I can assure you that I will do everything possible to ensure that full attention continues to be paid to the recommendations and issues raised in your report, both at the Council's session and in the coming months. The Council will continue to enhance its role in promoting an integrated approach to peace and development in a practical manner and take action towards implementing the relevant recommendations in your report on the prevention of armed conflict and General Assembly resolution 55/281. As a central intergovernmental body for coordination in the United Nations system, the Council will continue to deal with the root causes of violence and engage constructively in peace-building, including poverty eradication, economic and social reconstruction and development, humanitarian assistance and the promotion of human rights.

(*Signed*) Ivan **Šimonović**

[2] E/2002/49